

half as many contemporary novels as there are students. A group of sectional books, to be selected from a list prepared by the state association of teachers of English, is advised.

Superintendents, teachers, and librarians who wish a copy of the report may obtain it upon request by sending five cents in stamps to the National Council of Teachers of English, 211 West 68th Street, Chicago, Illinois.

FROM HENRY THOREAU'S JOURNAL

March 31, 1853 (AET. 35) Whatever your sex or position, life is a battle in which you are to show your pluck, and woe be to the coward. Whether passed on a bed of sickness or a tented field, it is ever the same fair play and admits no foolish distinction. Despair and postponement are cowardice and defeat. Men were born to succeed, not to fail.

THE TEACHER'S LETTER BOX

EDITOR'S NOTE: Because so many letters asking for help on practical problems of the elementary school come to the desk of the Director of the Harrisonburg Training School, we have asked Miss Katherine M. Anthony to let THE VIRGINIA TEACHER publish each month a few of these requests with her replies.

While not attempting to compete with Emily Post or Kathleen Norris or Beatrice Fairfax, she has agreed to summarize a few requests each month and to give her answers. Perhaps the citation of sources and references along with other advice on how to do will even add a Frederic J. Haskin touch.

Dear Letter Box:

I am a new county supervisor and like it just fine. But there aren't enough hours in the day to get the work done. That is why I'm in a real jam just now. A group of upper grade teachers wants a list of new textbooks and workbooks in social studies. Do you have such a list on hand? And will you add just a word of comment about each book?

Old Student.

Dear Old Student:

First of all, your teachers should know the Rugg *Social Science Series*, Ginn and

Company. There are to be eight of these books, two per year for each of the last four years of the elementary school. The six books now ready are: *The First Book of the Earth*, *Nature Peoples, Communities of Men, Peoples and Countries*, *The Building of America*, and *Man at Work: His Industries*. The two books now in preparation are: *Man at Work: His Arts and Crafts* and *The Story of Civilization*.

Any teacher who is working for an understanding of the "major functions of social life" will find these books indispensable for her children. And, incidentally, reading them herself should help the teacher who has not yet caught the vision.

Another noteworthy new series is *Social Studies* by Bruner-Smith, Charles E. Merrill Company. It has as its purpose "to provide a new type of history on the level of the pupil in the intermediate grades," and offers "the vital story of how man has become what he is from what he was." Book One contains four units, *The Story of Agriculture*, *The Story of Fire*, *The Story of the Sea* and *The Story of Writing*. Book Two contains three units, *The Growth of the City*, *Feeding the Millions*, and *The Story of Clothing*. The company announces a third book, which may be off the press—although I have not seen it.

These Bruner-Smith materials tie up very closely with the objectives of the Virginia program. Moreover, their careful provision of relevant detail for each general idea and their simplicity in style should make them a real learning aid for both pupil and teacher.

Some of your teachers may be looking for a new series of elementary history texts. Here the Macmillan Company offers Edna McGuire's three volumes, *Glimpses into the Long Ago*, *A Brave Young Land*, and *A Full-Grown Nation*. These are beautiful books with a larger-than-usual page, clear type, and superb illustrations by George M. Richards. They are not as well written as are some of the

other newer texts; a general term or idea slips in once in a while without sufficient development of background. But look them over for yourself; they're significant enough to warrant that.

Just today I find in my mail still another new book in the social studies field. It is *America's Building: The Makers of Our Flag* written by Freeland, Walker, and Williams and published by Charles Scribners' Sons. This book is biographical in nature and is built as an "elaboration of Franklin K. Lane's tribute to the worker as flag-maker." Good for reference material; it includes not only warriors and statesmen but scientists, musicians, and even women!

This year your teachers will all be hunting diligently for material on the Orient. Try Scott, Foresman and Company's new unified geography and history, *The Old World Past and Present*. It is organized around problems in such a way that the pupil is helped to see the relation between man and his environment. I recommend this book particularly to teachers who hesitate about beginning with present-day affairs for fear the pupils will not come out with certain basic ideas.

And now for workbooks if your teachers must have them, and I suppose some of them must. Ginn and Company are offering a new series this fall, *The Pupil's Guide*. The first book has page references to Kelty's *The Beginnings of the American People and Nation* and the second to Kelty's *The Growth of the American People and Nation*. These workbooks stress study habits, including the development of vocabulary. They are for the formal teacher who is just beginning to use activities. Illustrations and outline maps are included.

Somewhat different from the ordinary workbook is *Living Long Ago and Now* by Joy M. Lacey, Johnson Publishing Company. It has considerable content material as well as learning exercises. A pupil

bibliography is included, as are outline maps and illustrations.

Dear Letter Box:

I am going to ask a big favor of you and I hope you will not mind doing it for me. Would you send me a sample of the reports used in the Main Street School? I am teaching part of the first and part of the second grade. There was an overflow, so they put in a new teacher, and wasn't I lucky? At least I thought so until today when the principal asked the primary teachers to revise the report cards. I liked the ones we used in Harrisonburg and believe it would help us a great deal to see a copy. Could you send it by return mail?

Perplexed

Dear Perplexed:

I am enclosing the copy of the report card you asked for. We are using this again this year and so far no one has suggested making any changes. But we are still mimeographing the material. Printing seems so much more final than mimeographing, and we want to keep working at this problem.

After all, the report card form is relatively unimportant just so it is flexible enough to let the teacher adapt her study of each child to fit his needs. What you write on the card is the thing that counts. And since you are beginning this committee work so soon after your graduation, I'm going to jot down some standards to guide you in studying your children and reporting their progress to parents.

The report card should be very clear to the child, the parent, and the principal, as well as to the teacher. Limiting the number of items reported on at any one time helps here, because a complete descriptive account of the child is not a report but a part of the school's cumulative record. Again, writing only about specific things almost always promotes understanding. You see, first-grade children are almost as bewildered as their parents by such terms as *social habits* and *co-operation*. But everyone concerned knows what it means to *put away materials* and *take turns in talking*.

Yet another way to secure understanding is to use simple, clear statements. I have seen many report cards sent out with flagrant English errors as well as confusing statements.

The report card has one main purpose, to guide learning. For that reason it must always be constructive in its suggestions. If the teacher must make negative criticism, the place for it is in a parent-teacher conference. To put this same point in a different way, the report card should use the future tense a great deal. Past accomplishment should usually be reported on only when some special effort has been put forth. The main emphasis is put on what teacher and child agree to work on during the next period. The exception, of course, is with a child who lacks confidence and needs encouragement. A recital of various things well done may be of great help in such a case. But a descriptive report praising a superior child for things he has not labored on may be a bad influence. He, too, has the right to be challenged to move forward, to exert himself for improvement.

If the report card is really to guide learning, it must not only be constructive; it must carry with it some idea of how to attack the job. This was touched on in discussing clearness, but it is so important that I am going to add another illustration. *Writing neater* is too vague for a second grade child but *keeping on the line or making certain letters three spaces tall* can become a tangible goal.

Forgive the sermon and come to see us.

THE READING TABLE

THE DEFINITION OF PSYCHOLOGY. By Fred S. Keller. New York: Appleton-Century Company. 1937. Pp. 111. \$1.00.

More restricted in size and scope than Dr. Heidbreder's *Seven Psychologies*, this book deals with the four most prominent historic American schools of psychology: structuralism, functionalism, behaviorism, and Gestalt. The brief compass of the book perhaps accounts for the omission of such leaders as Thorndike and Wood-

worth, and the lack of reference to psychoanalysis and the newer trends in organismic psychology. The book is thoroughly readable for the most part and a worthy introduction to the problem of psychological viewpoints.

W. J. GIFFORD

THE HIGHER LEARNING IN A DEMOCRACY. By Harry D. Gideonse. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. 1937. Pp. 34. 50 cents.

A member of the faculty of Chicago University, Dr. Gideonse, in this small book challenges the viewpoint of his superior, President Hutchins, in a discussion of the chaotic state of college and university education at the present time. Whereas Dr. Hutchins insists upon a return to classical philosophy and metaphysics, Dr. Gideonse holds that science rightly interpreted and correlated with other studies is bound to be the core of the modern curriculum. He points with some care to the Chicago University experiment and presents a very stimulating discussion of the dangers of authoritarianism and absolutism which he believes are encouraged in Dr. Hutchins's viewpoint in his *The Higher Learning in America*. These Dr. Gideonse calls the "twin enemies of the free and democratic society."

W. J. GIFFORD

FAITH IN AN AGE OF FACT. By Edward H. Reisner. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc. 1937. Pp. 117. \$1.50.

Grounded on the thesis of Dewey's *A Common Faith* that the world today needs a less supernatural and more socialized religion, Dr. Reisner traces the breakdown in the older intellectual, religious, and ethical systems of thought under the impact of modern science. He believes that modern man, realizing the heritage of the past, must go forward in a faith in a good society in which are steadily eliminated such evils as poverty, racial discrimination, bigotry, and lack of recreational and aesthetic opportunities. Many readers will no doubt feel that Dr. Reisner is proposing a social ethics rather than a new religious outlook.